

## Message Text

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ACTION NEA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SCS-03 FBO-02 MCT-01 DHA-02 AID-05  
CCO-00 PM-04 H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSC-05 SP-02 OC-06  
OPR-02 PA-01 USSS-00 PRS-01 SCA-01 A-01 OMB-01  
SS-15 SY-05 CIAE-00 NSAE-00 NSCE-00 SSO-00  
INRE-00 NEAE-00 /079 W  
-----059758 051829Z /53

O R 051033Z JUL 77  
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3776  
INFO AMEMBASSY AMMAN  
USINT BAGHDAD  
AMEMBASSY BEIRUT  
AMEMBASSY CAIRO  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY KUWAIT  
AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV  
SECDEF  
DIA WASHDCP  
USCINCEUR  
USIA WASHDC

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C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (EO, TAGS, AND SUBJ)

E.O. -11652: N/A  
TAGS: PINS, SY  
SUBJECT: JULY 4 EXPLOSION IN DAMASCUS DAMAGES AIR  
FORCE HEADQUARTERS

1. SUMMARY: AT 1700L JULY 4 LARGE EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE  
ACROSS FROM AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS IN FASHIONABLE ABU  
RUMMANEH SECTION OF DAMASCUS. BOMB WAS IN AUTO,  
WHICH PARKED NEXT TO WALL OF AMERICAN SCHOOL ACROSS STREET  
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FROM VERSAILLES RESTAURANT. HOLE BOLW IN WALL, BUT NO  
AMERICANS INJURED; LOCAL MEDIA ANNOUNCED ON INDIVIDUAL  
KILLED AND 12 INJURED BY SHATTERED GLASS. MEDIA AS ACCUSED  
IRAQIS OF PERTERATING CRIME. IN OUR VIEW MOST THAT CAN BE  
SAID AT PRESENT IS THAT IT IS ANOTHER IN SERIES OF VIOLENT  
INCIDENTS OVER FIRST HALF OF 1977 PERPETRATED BY  
OPPONENTS OF ASSAD REGIME. END SUMMARY.

2. AT 1700L JULY 4 MOST OF DAMASCUS WAS STARTLED BY SOUND OF MASSIVE EXPLOSION IN FASIONABLE ABU RUMMANEH SECTION OF CITY. EMBOFFS LIVING NEARBY OBSERVED THAT IT TOOK PLACE AT CORNER ACROSS FROM AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS, NEXT TO BOTH THE AMERICAN COMMUNITY SCHOOL AND THE VERSAILLES RESTAURANT AND NEAR ORIENT HOSPITAL. WINDOWS WERE SHATTERED IN NEIGHBORHOOD AND AT AF BUILDING AND LARGE HOLE WAS BLOWN IN WALL SURROUNDING SCHOOL PLAYGROUND (WALL HAS ALREADY BEEN REBUILT BY SARG AND WINDOWS REPLACED AT AF HEADQUARTERS). EXPLOSIVES WERE APPARENTLY PLACED IN CAR, WHICH SOME ON THE SCENE CLAIM HAD KUWAITI LICENSE PLATE. CAR WAS COMPLETELY DEMOLISHED.

3. SYRIAN MEDIA REPORTS NOTED THAT REMAINS OF A BODY FOUND IN THE CAR. REMAINS OF A BODY ALSO FOUND ON PLAYGROUND NEAR THE WALL; IT WAS SPECULATED THAT THIS PERSON MAY HAVE BEEN A PASSERBY ALTHOUGH HE MAY ALSO HAVE BEEN IN VEHICLE. NO AMCITS WERE INJURED BY BLAST, ALTHOUGH SOME EMBASSY CHILDREN WERE PLAYING AT OPPOSITE END OF PLAYGROUND WHEN EXPLOSION OCCURRED. CAO, WHOSE APAREMENT IS LOCATED SOME 50-75 YEARS FROM CITE OF EXPLOSION, HAD FRONT DOOR OF APARTMENT BLOWN OPEN AND WAS THROWN ACCORSS LIVING ROOM BY CONCUSSION. FRENCH COMMERCIAL ATTACHE WHO WAS DRIVING BY AT TIME SUFFERED FACIAL CUTS. SCHOOL PROPERTY SUSTAINED WINDOW DAMAGE FROM CONCUSSION AS WELL AS PLENTY OF DEBRIS SCATTERED ALONG PLAYGROUND.

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4. TOP SARG MILITARY/SECURITY OFFICIALS, MANY OF WHOM LIVE IN ABU RAMMANEH AREA, WERE QUICKLY ON SCENE FOR INITIAL ASSESSMENT OF DAMAGE. EMBOFFS SAW COS SHIHABI, AF COMMANDER JAMIL, AF INTELLIGENCE CHIEF KHULI AND COTSSA MIN DABBAGH INVESTIGATING WRECKAGE WITH THEIR AIDES.

4. AFTER INITIAL BLACKOUT IMPOSED ON LOCALLY BASED INTERNATIONAL NEWS STRINGERS, SYRIANMEDIA HAVE GIVEN INCIDENT FULL COVERAGE. LATE NIGHT JULY 4 TELEVISION NEWS RAN LENGTHY FILM CLIPS OF DAMAGE DONE TO ADJACENT BUILDINGS AND CARS. JULY 5 PRESS PUBLISHED FRONT-PAGE ACCOUNTS OF BOMBING. PRESS MADE NO MENTION THAT SITE OF EXPLOSION WAS NEAR AF BUILDING OR AMERICAN SCHOOL.

6. MEDIA ARE BLAMING IRAQIS FOR THE INCIDENT. ACCORDING TO PRESS, DOCUMENTS FOUND IN THE CAR CONFIRM THAT IT ENTERED SYRIA FROM IRAQ JUNE 28. PRESS CONCLUDED THAT, "AVAILABLE EVIDENCE CONFIRMS THAT REGIME OF BAGHDAD ASSASSINS STANDS BEHIND THIS NEW CRIME AGAINST SYRIAN CITIZENS. IT IS A LINK IN THE CHAIN OF VICIOUS ACTS BY TIKRITI TRIBAL REGIME TO CAUSE PANIC AMONG PEACEFUL PEOPLE IN SYRIAN AND TO CARRY

OUT ZIONIST COLONIALIST DESIGN WHICH AIMS TO WEAKEN SYRIA UNDER ILLUSION THAT SUCH BASE ACTS CARRIED OUT BY BAGHDAD REGIME OF KILLERS WOULD UNDERMINE STEADFASTNESS OF STRUGGLING SYRIA AND WOULD PREJUDICE ITS PRINCIPLED ARAB STANDS. THIS NEW CRIME WAS MEANT TO KILL THE LARGEST NUMBER OF PASSERBY, PATIENTS AT THE ORIENT HOSPITAL AND INHABITANTS OF ADJACENT BUILDINGS."

7. RADIOS BAGHDAD AND JERUSALEM HAVE REPORTED CASUALTIES AS SIX KILLED AND 11 WONDED, FROM REPORTS OF THOSE ON SCENE SHORTLY AFTER EXPLOSION, WE CAN ONLY CONFIRM ONE DEATH.

8. COMMENT: DESPITE FACT THAT EXPLOSION TOOK PLACE ON LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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JULY FOURTH AND CAUSED DAMAGE TO US PROPERTY, IT IS UNLIKELY IN OUR JUDGMENT THAT PERPETRATORS HAD IN MIND ANY US TARGET OR CONNECTION. CAR WHICH WAS BLOWN UP WAS LOCATED AS CLOSE AS IT COULD BE PARKED TO SYRIAN AIR FORCE HEADQUARTERS WITHOUT AROUSING IMMEDIATE SUSPICIONS AND THAT APPEARS TO HAVE BEEN PRIMARY TARGET. SINCE AF COMMANDER NAJI JAMIL IS ALSO OVERALL COORDINATOR OF SYRIAN SECURITY SERVICES, INCIDENT IS PARTICULARLY EMBARRASSING TO SYRIAN SECURITY AUTHORITIES. THUS IRAQ HAS BEEN QUICKLY LABELED AS THE CULPRIT. WE SHARE THE PREVALENT VIEW HOWEVER THAT THIS IS ANOTHER IN SERIES OF VIOLENT INCIDENTS CARRIED OUT BY OPPONENTS OF ASSAD REGIME. IRAQI SPONSORED OR NOT, FOLLOWING ON ASSASSINATION OF UNIVERSITY RECTOR AND BRIGADIER RAZZUQ EARLIER THIS YEAR.

9. A SECOND INTERPRETATION, HOWEVER, HAS BEEN HEARD LOCALLY AND SHOULD NOT BE DISMISSED COMPLETELY. THAT IS THAT PERPETRATORS WERE REJECTIONISTS PROTESTING WHAT THEY VIEW AS SYRIAN U.S. COORDINATION IN LEBANON AND IN ME PEACE EFFORTS. THUS THE TIE-IN WITH JULY FOURTH AND THE AMERICAN SCHOOL. IN THE HOT HOUSE RUMOR MILL OF DAMASCUS A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS ARE LIKELY TO SHARE THIS VIEW OR AT LEAST RESERVE JUDGMENT ON IT. PELLETREAU

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## Message Attributes

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